

BOUGHT HER ANCESTORS.

The lady was a widow and rich—very rich—as the French novelist says—richissime, writes Walter Besant. The gentleman was a widower past sixty, extremely, even ridiculously poor and the last of a noble and historical house. History is full of the achievements of his people.

Froissart mentions their exploits in every other page; they were always taking this side or the other, for the King or against the King.

When they took a side they meant it. Whichever side they took it always ended in their being captured and decapitated for high treason or else killed in battle.

From father to son, from generation to generation, for long centuries, none of them ever went out of the world from an inglorious feather bed—it was always from the grassy field of honor or from a scaffold. A gray beard was unknown in that house nor had any of them ever experienced the tender emotions of a grandfather.

The lady besides being a widow and richissime, was of ignoble origin and her late husband had made his money in trade. Reflections upon this point made her unhappy.

She was so rich that she thought she ought also to be noble, just to correspond. It is a common confusion of thought. She desired above all things to connect her riches with an ancient name and she made a proposal to the nobleman: "Marry me," she said. Give me the right to use your name.

"In return I will give you as handsome an annuity as you can possibly desire. You shall have the means of living as you please, and of obtaining all that you desire. I will not ask you to live in my house. You shall live where you please. I will only ask that, for appearance sake, you will take your place at my dinners, and that you will show up as the lord of the house at my receptions.

"It was arranged in this sense. The lady took and furnished for herself a great hotel. She had the rooms decorated in honor of this and that illustrious ancestor. The arms of the house were everywhere; the portraits, busts and statues of the house were in all the rooms; the pictures represented scenes and episodes in the history of the house.

The servants wore the ancient livery—the well-known livery of the house. The hotel became a museum of the house, and at dinners and on reception nights the Duke himself was always present, grave dignified and stately, with the look of one who had stepped out of a picture frame 500 years old and had put on the clothes of the nineteenth century, but not the manners.

When madame, the Duchess, was not at home he lived in his own chambers at the club after his own fashion. An excellent bargain, was it not, and one that seems perfectly fair to both parties?

A TEST OF LOVE.

She was as fair as the day and as stately as the night, and beautiful beyond the dream of any poet.

He was strong and brave as any knight that ever jostled on the plain, superb and handsome as the sculptured gods of Greece.

It happened by a propitious fate, that sometimes brings the brave and the beautiful together, that these two mortal paragons each had a fashionable suite of rooms in the most fashionable hotel of the most fashionable city of all the land.

It is really not much use to finish this story. The reader is shrewd and knows a thing or two and has read novels before, and knows already how this thing is coming out.

But suffice to say they met, and they loved with an unutterable and infinite devotion.

"Darling," said he—not at once, of course; he was no grump like that—but I like to get at the denouement of a story at the beginning and get it out of of the way. "Darling," said he, when the proper time had arrived, "I love you beyond expression, with a devotion that can never end. Be mine; oh, say that you will be mine.

A look of ineffable sadness, of infinite grief, came into her azure eyes.

"Peter," she said, "you know not what you ask. There is a dead secret in my life, which if you knew you would spurn me from thee like a deadly thing."

"Tell me the secret, darling," said he, "and I swear by my honor I will love thee all the more."

"Peter, my own, I will be frank and tell thee. I—I—I owe a

three-monthly bill for my suite of rooms in this hotel."

He looked into her lustrous eyes with an expression of increased endearment.

"Sibyl, my darling," said he, "so do I. We owe the worded landlord two large bills. Let us wed and make the two bills one."

"Oh, my heart's love!" she cried. "Oh, my hero, my financier!" and she threw herself into his arms.

Thus two loving hearts and two growing hotel bills were beautifully united.

GRANKY OUIDA.

The last time Ouida was in London she was wandering along St. James place when a big yellow house up a side street caught her eye. She walked up and looked at it thoughtfully. She was a queer figure of a small, shrunken women of advanced years, with a seamed and wrinkled face, old-fashioned ringlets hanging in front of her ears, an odd little bonnet cocked askew on her head, hoop skirts, and old-fashioned congress gaiters.

She leaned forward on her big umbrella and gazed at the house for a long while. Finally she beckoned a policeman to her and asked him who lived there. The policeman touched his cap and remarked that it was the town house of the Prime Minister. Thereupon Ouida walked up to the door, rang the bell, and told the flunky who opened the door to announce to Lady Salisbury that she was there. The flunky looked her over carefully and sent a second footman up stairs with the message, while he kept his eye upon the odd-looking visitor.

Lady Salisbury, like most English women, had adored Ouida in her school days, and she came down stairs and set about the work of making the novelist welcome. She was cut short in her speech, however, by a terse inquiry from her visitor concerning the Prime Minister.

"If he is at home," said the novelist, "I should be greatly obliged if you will bring him down and I will look at him. I have never seen him, and as I am going away from London shortly I shall probably never have another opportunity of seeing him unless you bring him in now."

She seemed to regard the Marquis of Salisbury as a sort of prize pig to be exhibited, and she talked about him in such a curious fashion that Lady Salisbury went back to his study and brought in that exalted personage. Ouida looked at him through her spectacles with the same air of examining a prize exhibit that was suggested in her talk, and finally ended by expressing her approval of the Premier.

She was invited to come and dine in an informal way two nights later, and the Prime Minister, who had been enormously tickled by the interview, invited a number of lofty personages to his house that night. The dinner hour came, but no Ouida. The guests sat down and talked about the novelist, but not a word was heard from her and it was not discovered until the following day that she had read a speech of the Marquis of Salisbury on the morning of the day of the dinner, and it had displeased her so much that she had decided to have nothing to do with the Salisburys thereafter.

At the present time Ouida is in a pitiable condition. Her house and all her personal property in Italy have been sold to pay her debts, and she is almost destitute of money. Her eccentricities have become more and more pronounced, and it is said that the people who are brought into contact with her find it almost impossible to retain their composure under the sharp and biting comments which she makes upon them.

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